

VZCZCXRO3692  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHMOS  
DE RUEHIHL #0082/01 1331649  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 131649Z MAY 06  
FM REO HILLAH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0623  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0609  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 0674

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000082

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

BAGHDAD FOR NCT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/13/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NORTH BABIL SUNNI SHEIKHS CALL FOR RETENTION OF IP CHIEF,  
PREDICT SECTARIAN VIOLENCE OTHERWISE

REF: HILLAH 0080

HILLAH 00000082 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Alfred Fonteneau, RC, REO Al Hillah, Department  
of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a recent meeting with the Regional Coordinator (RC) nine Sunni Sheikhs and tribal leaders from northern Babil Province made a passionate appeal for the REO to prevent the termination of Provincial Police Chief General Qais Hamza Aboud Al-Momouri (ref). The Sheikhs argued that Babil is a strategically important province in Iraq and that the removal of the General would adversely affect the already deteriorating security situation. Moreover, the Sheikhs predicated that if the Provincial Council (PC) successfully fires Qais (who is a secular Shi'a), an increase in sectarian violence would be the result, specifically in northern Babil. Without direct intervention by the Embassy, they contended, the United States would be morally responsible for any further bloodshed. The RC noted that while General Qais is well respected and a dedicated professional it is not USG policy to intervene in internal Iraqi political matters. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The strategic importance of Babil, the group noted, cannot be underestimated. First, the province is located only sixty miles south of Baghdad and any security problems in the region will directly affect the capital. Second, Babil connects Baghdad with the southern portion of Iraq. If Babil descends into sectarian violence this will impact the ability of Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Army to intervene in southern provinces, according to the Sheikhs. The significance of the province therefore demands a professional Police Chief who is able to effectively deal with the insurgency, terrorists and sectarian violence.

13. (C) The Sheikhs stated that the PC and the governor are attempting to fire the General for purely political reasons. General Qais, they argued, incurred the fury of the PC because he specifically refused to allow the SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq) dominated PC to control the Babil police forces. During a recent Iraqi Police (IP) graduation Qais unveiled a lottery system designed to randomly disperse freshly graduated IPs to assignments. As a large number of these IPs possessed strong ties to Shi'a militias and were handpicked by the PC and governor to deploy in one coherent unit, Qais' approach calculatedly ensured their dispersion. The PC and the governor, according to reports, are attempting to rescind the deployment and reassign the IPs in support of SCIRI

objectives.

¶4. (C) The Sheikhs unanimously expressed their desire that General Qais remain in his position as the Babil Police Chief, noting that he is fair, professional, uncorrupted, loyal to Iraq and dedicated to his mission. One member noted that the police departments in northern Babil "were built upon the shoulders of the General." Others stated that although the IPs had previously arrested their family members, Qais' forces conducted themselves with the highest level of professionalism, and even earned the admiration of the Sunni population in northern Babil.

¶5. (C) The group warned that if the PC sacks Qais, sectarian violence will erupt, especially in northern Babil. Currently, they claimed, cooperation with Coalition and Iraqi security forces remains positive, but without a police leader they can trust it will be difficult to work with the provincial government. One Sheikh noted that if Qais is removed "we will have to take a different stand." The implication being that this "stand" would be against Iraqi and Coalition forces.

¶6. (C) REO staff asked the Sheikhs if they had contacted the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) to voice their concerns about this pressing issue. The Sheikhs responded that they have so far failed to reach individuals in the MOI capable of making decisions concerning Qais. They further argued that talking with MOI is not important or even necessary because the Coalition forces are the "highest authority" in Iraq. Based upon this logic, they cautioned that if the PC is successful in removing Qais, they intend to blame the United States. The RC enunciated to the group that he agreed with their assessment of the General, but that the competent and legal authorities of Iraq are responsible for determining the General's future as the Babil Police Chief.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: This meeting is highly significant because it marks the first time that tribal leaders from northern Babil approached the REO and voiced their concerns about a political

HILLAH 00000082 002.2 OF 002

issue in the province. It also demonstrates that the Sunni minority in the province is willing to participate in the political process. However, if the PC is able to fire General Qais it is likely the Sunni population in the north will feel increasingly isolated from governmental institutions. Also, there is little doubt that the PC will replace Qais with a SCIRI/Badr figure loyal to the current provincial administration. Such an appointment may intensify the cycle of sectarian violence south of Baghdad that is already proving difficult to break. END COMMENT.  
FONTENEAU